

FREEDOM AND ALCOHOLISM

by

Robert Wilson Renouf

A professional project
submitted to the faculty of
the School of Theology at Claremont
in partial fulfillment
of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
May, 1981

© Copyright

1981

Robert Wilson Renouf

This professional project, completed by

Robert Wilson Renouf,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Allen J. Moore

James C. Verheyden

April 8, 1981

Date

Joseph C. Pugh

Dean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS COMPONENTS	1
Problem Addressed by Project	1
Importance of the Problem	1
Thesis	3
Definition of Major Terms	3
Work Previously Done in the Field	6
Scope and Limitations	12
Procedure for Integration	13
II. FAMILY THERAPY TREATMENT OF AN ALCOHOLIC FAMILY FROM A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE: A CLINICAL CASE STUDY	14
Addressing the Problem Clinically	14
The Family	15
Family Member Introductions	15
The Family Session	22
Focus Statement	23
III. CRITICAL DESCRIPTION OF ALCOHOLIC FAMILY DYNAMICS USING CATEGORIES OF MURRAY BOWEN, M.D.	24
Differentiation of Self	24
Triangles	25
Nuclear Family Emotional System	26
Family Projection Process	26
Emotional Cut-off	27
Multi-generational Transmission Process and Sibling Position	28
Summary	28
IV. FREEDOM AND ALCOHOLISM: SOME EXISTENTIAL ISSUES	30
Therapy Program	30
Meaninglessness	31
Anxiety	32
Doubt	33
Guilt	34
Despair	35
Estrangement	37
Community	39

The Spiritual and Psychological: A Correlation	42
Atonement	43
Forgiveness	45
Summary	47
V. FREEDOM AND FORGIVENESS	49
Loss of Freedom	49
Recovery of Freedom	52
Meaning of Freedom	54
Summary	58
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	59
Forgiveness for the Malet Family	62
The Dynamics of Forgiveness	63
Conclusions	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	67

ABSTRACT

How freedom is attained in an alcoholic family system is the problem addressed by this research, freedom to break out of the obsessive/compulsive roles, to become freed, self-determining persons within a healthy family network. Theologically the problem is stated as a descriptive exploration of the relationship between alcoholism, personal freedom and forgiveness. The thesis of the research is the process of forgiveness makes possible certain freedoms, helps to overcome alienation, and provides opportunity for authentic community to develop, community in which persons have a sense of belonging. The research is basically a study in the psychology of freedom. The phenomenology of freedom has been explored through a case study and a critical theological reflection on those data, using the works of Paul Tillich. Social Science categories applied to the data were those of Murray Bowen, M.D.

Existential issues identified in the research are meaninglessness, anxiety, doubt, guilt, despair, estrangement, atonement, forgiveness and community. A correlation is shown between the spiritual and psychological factors of alcoholism. Loss of freedom, recovery of freedom and the meaning of freedom are described. Delusion of freedom is described as having been attained through denial, isolation, emotional cut-off, the abuse of alcohol and projection. The study shows the integration of a behavioral science approach to the family therapy treatment of an alcoholic family in a theological frame of reference and shows the relationship existing between the

two. The research indicates that freedom seems to be made possible through a process of forgiveness, replacing denial and delusion.

Several conclusions can be listed resulting from this research. Conclusions deal with the commonality alcoholic family systems have with most family systems, the close relationship existing between the spiritual and psychological factors of alcoholism, and the need for priest and psychotherapist to treat both the spiritual and psychological symptoms manifested in alcoholic family systems. Opportunity must be given for forgiveness to become part of the therapy process.

This research has demonstrated that the ultimate concerns of life, death, freedom, existential isolation and meaninglessness are manifested in personality and psychopathology. In this research project the fundamental concerns of therapy and the central issues of human experience are woven together within a theological context. Freedom is of concern to the priest and the clinician. The source of freedom, its nature and how it can be achieved are the subjects of this research project.

Chapter I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS COMPONENTS

Problem Addressed by Project

How freedom is attained in an alcoholic family system is the problem addressed by this project. Freedom is described as the ability to break out of the obsessive/compulsive roles often found in such a system and to become self-determining persons within a healthy family network. Theologically, the problem is stated as descriptive exploration of the relationship between alcoholism, personal freedom and forgiveness.

Importance of the Problem

Alcoholism, a family disease, is one of the major health problems in the United States today. A treatable disease, it ranks just behind cancer and heart disease as a major killer. Approximately nine to ten million Americans suffer from alcoholism. Alcoholism is not a respecter of sex, age, socio-economic class, race or national origin. Its impact on family life, industry, institutions and communities is widespread. Alcoholism involves church members and churches, the religious and non-religious alike.

Alcoholism has been described as having mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual implications. The medical field has made considerable advancement in the treatment of alcoholism, as have psychotherapy and counseling. Such treatment and therapy programs increasingly supplement the basic work of Alcoholics Anonymous, AlAnon and Alateen.

An integrated, interdependent, holistic approach is required for truly successful treatment of alcoholism. The individual person, his/her family and immediate community be it work, social or religious, must be taken into consideration in an effective therapeutic treatment program.

This project will explore the relationship of freedom to the successful treatment of alcoholism. Stewart wrote that the problem in long term therapy was gradually to divert the drinker from his/her absorption with the pleasure principle to a close examination of the higher principle of freedom.¹ Johnson wrote that treatment for the entire family together involves acceptance and forgiveness in order to rebuild the family system.²

This study will make use of the research literature of marital and family therapy, the psychological literature of alcohol studies and the theological works of Tillich dealing with freedom and forgiveness. The study will build upon the basic work of Clinebell and extend Johnson's work dealing with the dynamics of forgiveness. The project will integrate therapy and theology through the use of a descriptive clinical case study methodology coupled to descriptive theological reflections and application.

The benefits of the project will be to:

1. enhance the literature in the fields of theology, alcohol studies and family systems by integrating forgiveness, alcoholism, and systems theory,

¹David A. Stewart, A Thirst for Freedom (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1960), pp. 50-52.

²Vernon E. Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 99-110.

2. assist therapists in clinical practice to see the role of forgiveness as it relates to freedom in alcoholic families,
3. assist clergy in their understanding of the important place played by systems (family, church, job, etc.) in the treatment of alcoholism and the key place of forgiveness and freedom in the total treatment plan, and, finally to
4. provide a practical tool for use in the local church to raise the level of congregational consciousness around the issues of alcoholism and freedom, through workshops and seminars based upon sound theoretical data and useable educational group methodology.

Thesis

The thesis of this project is the process of forgiveness makes possible certain freedoms, helps to overcome alienation, and provides opportunity for authentic community to develop, community in which persons have a sense of belonging.

Definition of Major Terms

Alcoholism - Perhaps the most widely accepted scholarly definition of alcoholism is the one offered by Keller and Efrow:

Alcoholism is a chronic illness, psychic or somatic or psychosomatic, which manifests itself as a disorder of behavior. It is characterized by the repeated drinking of alcoholic beverages, to an extent that exceeds customary dietary use or compliance with the social customs of the community and that interferes with the drinker's health, or the social or economic functioning.³

A simpler definition might be regarded as when one's drinking frequently interferes with his/her business, social life or health.

³Robert L. Hammond, Almost All You Ever Wanted to Know about Alcoholism (Lansing, MI: AID, 1973), p. 3.

Freedom - Freedom has been described as the power or condition of acting without compulsion. Human freedom has been defined in various ways. Existential thought described human beings as essentially free and not determined by any external factor whatever. Traditional Anglican moral theology attempted a reconciliation of authority with freedom. In the traditional view the Christian finds his freedom in forgiveness from the power of sin. The Christian is justified and released from the sense of guilt. May stated that man is distinguished by his capacity to know that he is determined and to choose his relationship to what determines him. Intentionality is a key factor for consideration in human freedom. Tillich stated that in human freedom the power of life exists and it is the source of human vitality.⁴ In the encounter with reality human beings are already beyond the encounter. This is human freedom. Also, human freedom has certain limitations as demonstrated by depth psychology. How a person attains freedom is a theological question.

Forgiveness - To forgive is to cease to feel resentment against someone on account of a wrong committed. It is to give up claim to requital from or retribution upon an offender. To forgive may be seen in terms of remitting the penalty and granting relief. For the Thomist forgiveness relates to justice; with Reinhold Niebuhr forgiveness was seen as the impossible possibility after which piety must aspire. With much liberation theology justice must always be done before forgiveness can be morally justifiable. Johnson's experience in working with alcoholic families was that the experience of human forgiveness by both the injurer and the injured had deep benefit spiritually to accept the

⁴Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 82.

intuitive insight that God's love and mercy are real and available to the promotion of spiritual growth and health. To hold together is the unnegotiable aim of forgiveness.⁵

Community - The building of a "new order," a new community, that makes possible the continued liberation of members of an alcoholic family is a possible outcome of family forgiveness. Despair, being without hope, will need to be addressed in such a community. There is no way of escaping it, especially in an alcoholic system. The need to accept "oneself as accepted in spite of one's despair about the meaning of this acceptance," as Tillich phrased it, is a religious necessity.⁶

As the family "holds together" it will need to become an authentic community where each person can experience acceptance, forgiveness, love, support and the overcoming of despair. The freedom and power of the family will be determined by their willingness to accept responsibility for the future. By joining together in the healing expression of their personal relationships with each other, and by accepting their personal natures and needs, a community can be created in which the dynamics of the system make possible the expanded dignity of each person in the family and in their relationships with each other. This is the sense in which community is used in this project.

Family Therapy and Family Systems Theory - Family therapy encompasses a range of approaches with practitioners who consider themselves family therapists seeing a relationship between individual

⁵Johnson, p. 108.

⁶Tillich, p. 176.

psychopathology and family psychopathology. Family therapists believe in the therapeutic benefits of seeing the family together. Theoretically the family is viewed as integrally involved in the complex nexus that results in disturbed psychological states. The family is viewed as a functioning unit with all family members being perceived as a part of the unit. When alcoholism is present each family member is affected by the growing dysfunction of the chemically dependent person. Each family member adapts to the behavior of the chemically dependent person by developing behavior that causes the least amount of personal stress. The theory is that when family relationships within the system are modified through family therapy, the alcoholic dysfunction decreased.

Work Previously Done in the Field

In an extensive review of the literature describing family therapy in the alcoholism field, Steinglass reported several widely accepted key concepts which form the foundation of the modality.⁷ They were:

1. The family is viewed as an operational system and pathology is defined as a structural or functional family in balance.
2. A sense of balance or stability (homeostasis) is established by families and they resist any threat to that balance.
3. Psychopathology is redefined in family terms.
4. Communication patterns within the family are seen as reflecting the basic structural and interactional patterns governing the family's behavior.
5. There is a focus on "behavioral context." The relationships between individual behavior and the interactional field within which

⁷Peter Steinglass, "Family Therapy in Alcoholism," Alcohol, Health and Research World, 1, 1 (Fall 1976), 4.

the behavior is expressed are as important as the internal processes of family members.

6. Boundaries of relationships that separate individual family members and the nuclear family as a whole from the outside world serve to isolate family members from each other and the family from the larger community.

Other recent literature has defined the disease of alcoholism as a family lifestyle. Bowen, especially, focused on functional factors of relationships - what, how, when, and where. He avoided preoccupation with why, thereby avoiding the placing of blame. The family was viewed by Bowen as an operational system and pathology was defined as a structure of functional imbalance in the family. He regarded alcoholism as one of the common human dysfunctions existing within the context of an imbalance in functioning of the total family system.⁸

The core of the Bowen theory was that a biological approach leads one to postulate the existence of two parallel processes, an emotional process and an intellectual process. These processes are the two fundamental components of human behavior. Bowen stressed the importance of the intellectual system over the primitive emotional system.

The theory that developed from this core was organized into eight separate concepts or variables. The variables in the Bowen theory were: differentiation of self; triangles; nuclear family emotional system (marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, impairment of one or more children); family protection process; emotional cut-off; multi-generational transmission process; sibling position; and societal regression.

⁸Murray Bowen, Family Therapy in Clinical Practice (New York: Aronson, 1978), pp. 259-268.

Wegnscheider defined chemical dependency as being a family disease and a primary disease within each family member.⁹ The chemically dependent person is greatly affected by the members of his/her family as they are affected by the drinker. She has identified family member roles as the chemically dependent person, chief enabler, family hero, scapegoat, lost child and mascot. She saw that the walls of defenses compulsively covered up the true feelings of each family member and each lived in the trap of self-delusion. She further observed that rationalization, projection and denial became ways of life for an alcoholic family, putting each member further out of touch with reality and increasingly preoccupied with the dependent's drinking.

There is not a great deal of research literature available in the field of alcoholism to religious issues such as freedom and forgiveness. Much of the existing literature does not have empirical validity, lacks substance, or deals exclusively with alcoholism as a medical, social, counseling, psychotherapy or religious problem. In reality, alcoholism is a human condition that needs to be addressed by each discipline. However, two members of the clergy have produced books that exhibit such inclusiveness. They are Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., a Methodist minister and Vernon E. Johnson, an Episcopal priest. A brief review of these two authors is in order.

Clinebell - Clinebell's book, Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic, is accepted as a standard in the field. The resources of the Christian faith are applied to the problems of dealing with alcoholism. He showed how religion provides a spiritual and psychological substitute

⁹Sharon Wegscheider, The Family Trap (Minneapolis: Johnson Institute, 1976), p. 3.

for alcohol. The book has been described as "scientifically sound and religiously honest and helpful." Perhaps its major contribution was the thoroughness of relating religion to the disease of alcoholism. Clinebell had an understanding of alcoholism and its development and was able to present a psychological analysis of various religious approaches to the problem. The exploration of the ethical side of alcoholism was most helpful, as was his discussion on prevention and strategy for the local church. Clinebell had a grasp of the role played by the non-alcoholic family members and their need for support. He also detailed the role that clergy could perform as primary intervention agents, often well in advance of the family's willingness to accept other professional help. This book needs to be in the library of all parish clergy and is a helpful resource for informed laity.

Johnson - Johnson, a self-defined recovering alcoholic, has written a practical guide describing the alcoholism treatment which has worked for the vast majority (7 out of 10 according to Johnson) of persons exposed to the approach at the Johnson Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His book, I'll Quit Tomorrow, is based on the premise that the whole person must be approached with multi-disciplinary action on various levels: physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual. He believed that alcoholism was totally consuming of its victim and if one of these areas was neglected, recovery of the person was threatened and relapse was probable if not certain.

Johnson saw the disease of alcoholism as being primary, progressive, chronic and fatal. But, he believed, it can be arrested and the sufferer recovered. It became increasingly evident to Johnson and his associates that the most urgent need was to stop the process of the

disease as early as possible. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Johnson Institute was in the area of using crises creatively to bring about intervention in the life of the alcoholic, especially at earlier stages of the disease. Johnson's chapter on the "Dynamics of Forgiveness" offered seminal ideas for the development of this research project. I'll Quit Tomorrow needs to be on the library shelves of all clergy seeking a practical guide to alcoholism treatment, an approach that has been researched and that worked for many persons.

Stewart - An assumption of this project is that in long term therapy the goal is gradually to divert the drinker from his/her absorption with the pleasure principle to a close examination of the higher principle of freedom. A book that develops this principle is Thirst for Freedom by David A. Stewart. Personal freedom was seen as the main goal of recovery for the alcoholic person, a freedom that endures and fosters personal growth. Sobriety was viewed as a creative discipline in the art of freedom and growth, and of love. He saw that to be yourself is to become yourself. To be freed, productive and happy in abundant living through empathy becomes a goal of the recovering alcoholic person. He believed this theme was important and was expressed in various ways throughout this research project.

Tillich - Paul Tillich, perhaps the leading theological existentialist, provided a characteristically balanced summary of thought about freedom in its broad outline. In this project freedom will be examined through the writings of this one major theologian. Tillich stated that human beings are free in so far as they set and pursue purposes.¹⁰

¹⁰Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) III, 303.

He wrote that man is able to transcend the given situation, "leaving the real for the sake of the possible." Self-transcendence, the ability not to be bound to the situation of the present, was the first and basic quality of freedom, according to Tillich. He also stated that man's "centered action," his freedom, in part determined his transition from one situation to another. He said that self-transcendence is not absolute but within limits it is able "to produce something qualitatively new." This concept is central to the theological position of this project.

The writings of Clinebell, Johnson, Stewart and Tillich raised questions to be dealt with in this project, questions that help bring the project problem statement into clearer focus. What does the loss of freedom look like, especially to the alcoholic person and the alcoholic family? What does the recovery of freedom look like for the recovering alcoholic and his/her family? What does acceptance and forgiveness look like for the alcoholic family? These questions will be explained in this project.

This project intends to show the integration of family systems therapy and theology and to personalize the theory by looking at freedom, acceptance and forgiveness through the life experiences of the alcoholic persons and the families in which they have roots. It is this focus to personalize (humanize, if you will) as well as to theologize that makes this paper somewhat different from previous writings in the fields of alcoholism and theology.

Clinical Case Study Approach - The clinical case study approach has been developed by Allport (1965) and White (1952). Allport attempted to look at the world through the individual participant's eyes to examine

unconscious motivation, symptoms and defenses, and to consider apparent personality traits. White did not see individuals as being static, passive or helpless and only receiving influences from their environment. Rather, he saw individuals taking action upon their environment and effecting change in it. Each person's real situation differs from every other person's and must be treated accordingly.¹¹ Allport's approach might be considered existential with holistic and subject-centered qualities. White's approach was more of a social view with especial emphasis on the influence of a nonformative culture.

Scope and Limitations

This project will look at alcoholism through the theoretical perspectives of Clinebell, Johnson and Stewart. It will examine freedom and forgiveness by showing the correlation of Tillich's works in those areas to be existential issues raised through the application of Bowen's categories to the case study of one alcoholic family. The study is limited to the writings of Tillich, Clinebell, Johnson and Stewart. The subject of alcoholism will be explored from a family systems perspective. Freedom and forgiveness will be developed theologically through the writings of Tillich.

The project will deal with the disease of alcoholism, as described in a medical model, to the extent that the disease concept is intrinsic to the nature of alcoholism. The project focus will be on alcoholism as a family lifestyle, a social system. Likewise, an evangelical description of freedom, forgiveness, sin, etc. will not be developed. Rather the basic existentialist approach of Tillich will be

¹¹R. W. White, Lives in Progress (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1952), pp. 328-330.

used. The project is likewise limited in not dealing with justification, nor with faith. These two areas could well be developed in future research.

Procedure for Integration

The project will include an empirical case study of one family with whom I and my professional colleagues have worked clinically (various members at various times) over the last several years. Social science categories, developed by Murray Bowen, M.D., will be applied to the clinical case study. A descriptive theological reflection will be made, theological issues identified and defined, and the relationship of the theological principles to the clinical data will be shown.

The categories of Bowen emerge from many years of research and clinical experience and are widely accepted in the field of family therapy. The theological approaches to be used in the project are especially similar to the correlational methods of Tillich and Hiltner. The influence of Snyder, Holmes, Segundo, Caldwell and Moore will be apparent. In brief, in this project an effort will be made to discern the existential issues present in the lives of the family described in the case study. Then an attempt will be made to formulate appropriate theological responses based upon the works of Tillich. This will include a descriptive theological reflection and application of theological principles, including a section on freedom and forgiveness.

Chapter II

FAMILY THERAPY TREATMENT OF AN ALCOHOLIC FAMILY FROM A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE: A CLINICAL CASE STUDY

The stated purpose of this study is to explore how freedom is attained in an alcoholic family system. It is basically a study in the psychology of freedom. The phenomenology of freedom will be explored through a case study and a critical theological reflection on those data. This chapter will be devoted to a descriptive case study.

An assumption of this study is that the problem in long term therapy with an alcoholic person and an alcoholic system is gradually to divert the drinker and his/her family from their absorption with the pleasure principle to close examination of the higher principle of freedom. For the alcoholic family system, freedom means breaking out of the obsessive/compulsive roles to become free, self-determining persons within a healthy family network. The hypothesis of this research is that treatment for the entire alcoholic family together involves acceptance and forgiveness in order to rebuild the family system. This project will present a theology of freedom and its correlation to existential realities in the case study. This chapter presents a descriptive case study to serve as the empirical base for critical study.

Addressing the Problem Clinically

The problem will be addressed through the study of one family with whom I have worked (various members at various times) over the

last several years and with whom I am still working. The family includes the father, a recovering alcoholic, the son and his wife (a practicing alcoholic), daughter A, who became "mother" to the family at age 12 when her mother died, and who was married to a practicing alcoholic. A's two daughters, the eldest rapidly becoming an alcoholic. Daughter B and her husband who is a paraplegic Vietnam veteran and a recovering alcoholic, and their son and daughter. The family will be studied from a systems perspective.

The Family

The family being studied is of French origin. (For purposes of this study the family will be given the surname of MALET. Each family member will be given a new first name.) Now living in Southern California, they resided for many years in a small, French-speaking, New England industrial city. The family is Roman Catholic, although the practice of their religion is less faithful since coming to California. This is especially true of the children and their children. The mother died when the eldest daughter was 12 years of age and the youngest daughter was five years old. The eldest daughter then became the "mother" of the household and literally became the actual mother of her younger sister. Current ages of the natural family are: Father - 61 years, Son (eldest child) - mid-40's, eldest daughter - 38 years, youngest daughter - 31 years. (All the in-laws are from the same New England city. French is still used in the family when addressing each other.

Family Member Introductions

Youngest daughter (Nancy). The youngest daughter called for an appointment in 1974. She sounded so distraught and in so much pain that

an emergency appointment was set for that afternoon. Upon arrival it became obvious her actual condition matched her telephone plea for help. Nancy appeared to be depressed, was crying incessantly, and acted very much like a hurt "little girl," with the world totally out of her control.

Her husband, a double-amputee paraplegic Vietnam veteran was described as being too involved in his own life to care adequately for her. Nancy described him as cold, angry, indifferent, involved with his "cronies," drinking too much, and in general, not a helpful husband, lover, friend or father. She described herself as feeling hurt, afraid, lonely, inadequate and angry. Nancy's wall of defenses included withdrawal, aloofness, quiet, distance. She was very dependent and felt she could do nothing for herself. The husband's sexual dysfunction caused her abject pain and anger.

Youngest daughter's male child (Peter). One of the preoccupations of the youngest daughter was with her four year old son. He did not behave, was unruly, didn't get along in school, his father had a poor relationship with him; these were some of the complaints his mother had about little Peter. She worried about him, suffered considerable anxiety about his being hurt and appeared to spend considerable time "protecting" him, especially from his father. Clinically the child checked out as quite "normal," who experienced the family stress and reacted to it by being rather hyper behaviorally.

Youngest daughter's husband (Sam). Sam's wife complained that he did not pay enough attention to her, that he was more interested in his "drinking buddies" and brother than he was in her. A double-amputee paraplegic veteran of the Vietnam conflict, Sam had received no counseling or psychological services regarding his war injuries (a tank commander, his

vehicle had been blown up. When he awoke he was in a San Francisco hospital bed.) After discharge from the Army, he did not work for a year or so and finally opened a small shop where he employed his brother and father.

The shop was also a source of conflict between him and his wife. According to his wife, Sam drank "too much." He was invited to share an appointment with his wife to help her therapy.

The husband proved to be very eager to talk. In fact, he talked throughout the entire one-hour session. Sam turned out to be somewhat of the "family hero," the hero of his family of origin as well as his wife's family. The hero status came from his military injuries, his Army pension, his business (known as "the family enterprise") and his ability to get along with people. The husband had several issues to discuss regarding his wife, their marriage, his son and his wife's relationship to their son. His sexual dysfunction and the role that played in the marital relationship engendered feelings of inadequacy, anger and anxiety. Sam admitted he drank rather heavily, saying it calmed his nerves, relieved his pain, relaxed him and helped him to sleep. Drinking served as the focus of his social life, too. Later, he entered one of our therapy groups to work on some of his own issues, with considerable success. (He returned regularly for work on the marriage.)

Youngest daughter's teenage niece (Marie). At the urging of her aunt, the teenage niece made an appointment to deal with feelings centered around her mother (sister to the youngest daughter who had raised the youngest daughter as a mother since the death of their own mother) and her alcoholic father. Marie indicated having strong peer value. Her behavior was defiant, acting out and sullen. Chemical use was important to her

life-style. Loneliness, anger, fear, hurt and rejection were some of the feelings she reported.

Marie was concerned about her father's drinking and his anti-social behavior. Her mother's suicidal threats caused her to experience high anxiety, fear and anger. She entered a teen-age therapy group and received individual, conjoint and family therapy as well.

Eldest daughter (Anne). The eldest daughter, mother of the niece, was asked to come in for a conjoint session with her daughter, at the daughter's request. From that beginning a separate therapeutic relationship developed with the mother. Anne shared with the therapy team that she was feeling increasingly powerless and fragile in her roles as wife and mother. She was self-blaming, super responsible, full of self-pity and resentment and manipulated the entire family system. Internally Anne reported feeling hurt, angry, fearful, pain, guilt and exhibited numerous somatic symptoms. She not only nagged but was beginning to join her husband in his excessive drinking.

Anne had assumed responsibilities as "mother" of the family at age 12, when her mother died. The family included the father, an older brother and the younger sister, about seven years her junior. Other relatives, aunts and uncles, lived in the same apartment house and nearby in the same village. Anne was looked upon as a shrew. Her self-image was poor, self-esteem low and she was, in general, depressed. She asked for therapy for her own sake, entered the system and worked through many of her own personal issues, including the divorce of her husband who had left while she was in therapy and various other family issues. The last issue Anne had to resolve was that of besetting anger at her mother for dying and anger at her father whom she believed was responsible for leaving

her without a mother. This was perhaps the most painful part of her therapy but, in many respects, one of the most important parts. With forgiveness of her father and mother came freedom and new options for the client.

Youngest child of eldest daughter (Suzanne). The youngest child of the eldest daughter, at that time a pre-teenage female, entered the therapy system to do some work around her relationship with her mother, father and sister. A sensitive child, she had developed roles resembling those of the family mascot and the lost child. At times Suzanne reported being hyperactive in various activities, activities that helped attract attention, and she saw herself as somewhat of a clown and fragile. Family members saw her as being "cute." At other times she reported being somewhat aloof, distant and withdrawn. The family saw her as being quiet and somewhat independent. As the therapy sessions progressed, Suzanne shared feelings of loneliness, hurt, inadequacy, anger, fear, insecurity and confusion. She also experienced feelings of rejection. Like her older sister, she too, appeared to be responding to the family dysfunctions by "acting out" various roles. She seemed to be "locked in" to the roles and almost driven to fulfill them. Through therapy Suzanne gradually saw new options, began to view her family in a new perspective and started expressing her feelings more directly.

Husband of eldest daughter (Paul). The husband was invited to a family session to assist with the therapy of his wife and two daughters. He accepted immediately and appeared with his family at the appointed time. Paul was cooperative and somewhat charming. At times he expressed anger toward the family members. Usually he entered into the therapy process.

Each family member, in earlier private sessions, had expressed concern, pain, anger and hurt regarding Paul's drinking. However, when the subject of his drinking was raised by one of the therapists in the course of the family session, the response was one of dismay that drinking could even be mentioned as a family problem. Denial was present; each family member took part in it.

Denial was one of the ways the family had adapted to Paul's drinking. As shown earlier, each family member adapted to the behavior of the chemically dependent Paul by developing behavior that caused the least amount of personal stress. Denial was part of the behavioral pattern.

Paul returned for a few individual sessions ("to help his family"), but they went nowhere. He had developed a defense system to protect the painful storehouse of repressed feelings. Some helpful therapy was done around his family of origin and his feelings toward his mother and father. However, his deepest feelings of pain, guilt, hurt, shame, fear, anger, etc., were not truly acknowledged. During his therapy he moved out of his home, not having told his family or therapy team. He moved into the home of another woman. His self-delusion in regard to the use of alcohol was never faced. The compulsive repression of feelings by each family member contributed to experiences of alienation throughout the system. It was probably survival behavior and protection from pain he could not face that prompted Paul to leave the family. The family reacted with anger, hurt and relief. Much work was required to help the family face the reality of Paul's self-removal from the system.

Oldest child, older brother (Henri). Henri is the older brother of Nancy and Anne. His involvement in the therapy process has been minimal. He appeared at the office several years ago when he thought his

younger sister, Nancy, had cancer. He also took part in a recent family session that included all adult family members. A few years older than Anne, he is married to a woman from his home town who, according to the other family members, is a practicing alcoholic. He joined the Navy a few years after his mother's death.

Both of his sisters seem to be very close to him. He has done no personal therapy but he was quite involved in the family session. Apparently he has expressed some guilt at not having taken more responsibility for family matters after the death of his mother.

The Father (Pierre). Presently 61 years of age, Pierre is a likeable man who does not seem to be perceived accurately by his family. Once a heavy drinker, he quit a number of years ago but never joined Alcoholics Anonymous. He simply quit drinking. A friendly person, Pierre has a strong circle of friends who admire and like him. Married several times, he is currently single. Pierre seldom deals with any of his children directly but usually goes through one of the other children. (For instance, he may ask Nancy what Anne is thinking about something or he will tell Henri what he feels about Anne.) Nancy is very fond of her father and has feelings of affection for him. She gets annoyed at him for planning parties at her house without consulting her. She becomes angry at other family members when they say negative things about him. Anne has strong anger feelings toward her father but has had a difficult time dealing with him directly. She has guilt feelings, thinking she drove away his wives by her obnoxious behavior. Neither daughter sees the father as a total human being. He is either idealized or despised. At the family session, for instance, Pierre was quite surprised to learn that Anne was

afraid of him. Much family energy goes into the father. His presence is very much felt in the entire family system.

The Family Session

A descriptive statement of the family session needs to be made due to its importance in the family process. From the previous statements it is apparent that some important therapy has been done with the Malet family over a considerable period of time. However, something was lacking. The therapy process was not coming together to form a whole. The process was not complete.

The therapy team decided to request a meeting of all adult members of the Malet family, including the in-laws. An open-ended session was scheduled on a weekend so everyone could attend. The purpose of the meeting was to open communication between the family members, help family members deal with each other more directly, encourage the family to level with each other and to get resentments, angers, expectations, etc. out in the open and, if possible, to forgive each other for past hurts. It was felt by the therapy team that as long as feelings of anger and resentment were being harbored it would be impossible to "let go" and get on with living. In short, these negative feelings toward each other were keeping family members emotionally fused and were keeping family members from exercising their freedom. Just as alcohol had served this purpose earlier, now repressed feelings of anger, hurt, rejection and resentment served as the glue of family fusion.

The family session lasted for several hours. The goals were met to varying degrees. For Anne, the process of forgiveness was started and ended several weeks later when, after a period of extreme pain in her

individual and group therapy sessions, she finally was able to "let go" and to accept her father, mother and family in more realistic terms. In reality, she was able to forgive them, and other family members have been able to forgive her for her past behavior and to accept her for the human being she is. The remaining member of the family in therapy, Anne is scheduled to leave the system within a few weeks, having learned, to some degree, to accept herself as a human being.

Focus Statement

An assumption of this paper is that chemical dependency is a family disease and a primary disease within each family member. In this family there are several persons who are, or have been, chemically dependent. The entire family system has been affected greatly by these chemically dependent persons. The relationship of the drinking family members to the mood-altering chemical contributed, over the years, to the family illness. Likewise, the chemically dependent persons have been greatly affected by the other members of the family.

Chapter III

CRITICAL DESCRIPTION OF ALCOHOLIC FAMILY DYNAMICS USING CATEGORIES OF MURRAY BOWEN, M.D.

This section of the paper will describe the dynamics of the Malet family by considering the variables identified by Dr. Murray Bowen.¹ The variables which have to be considered for such a description are differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multi-generational transmission process and sibling family position. Bowen's social regression variable will not be considered in this study.

Bowen regards alcoholism as "one of the common human dysfunctions existing in the context of an imbalance in the functioning of the total family system." Excessive drinking is related to high family anxiety. Self-defeating behaviors are fed by the high anxiety causing more anxiety. This self-feeding process can spiral into a functional collapse and the process can become a chronic pattern. In this chapter Bowen's social science categories will be applied to the clinical case study described in the previous chapter. His concepts of triangulation, intergenerational conflict, and the differentiation of oneself in one's family of origin will be applied.

Differentiation of Self

This concept is a cornerstone of Bowen's theory. Differentiation of self involves the degree of fusion versus differentiation between

¹Murray Bowen, Family Therapy in Clinical Practice (New York: Aronson, 1978).

emotional and intellectual functioning in each individual family member placed on a continuum of functioning along an axis. The Malet family has a history of being emotionally "stuck together," or to use Bowen's terms, the family has had an "undifferentiated family ego mass." A poorly differentiated person is trapped within a feeling world. Efforts to gain the comfort of emotional closeness can increase the fusion, which, in turn, can increase alienation from others. This was the case with each family member of the Malet family. The family members experienced alienation, separation and loneliness. Walls of partition divided family member from family member. The overall goal of the therapy team has been to help individual family members to rise up out of the emotional togetherness that has bound them.

Differentiation was achieved to a considerable degree by Nancy, her husband Sam, and Anne. In so doing, the entire family system was affected over a period of six years. Alienation was overcome gradually as each family member became more "solid" in his/her self. Without personal differentiation the walls of partition could not have been removed.

Triangles

Triangles refer to a three person emotional configuration as the building block of any emotional system. Under stress, the two person system is highly unstable and the tendency is to involve a third person. This was especially true of the Malet family. Nancy involved her son Peter when relating to her husband Sam. Sam involved his brother when relating to Nancy. Anne involved her daughter Marie when relating to her husband Paul. Rather than relating directly to his children, Pierre

triangled a third person. And so the family related to each other. Over time the emotional forces moved from one active triangle to another.

Various therapists were able to stay in viable emotional contact with several of the most significant family members of the various triangles for a long enough period of time to help the fusion between the various family members to begin slowly to resolve.

Nuclear Family Emotional System

This describes the pattern of emotional functioning in a family in a single generation. Certain basic patterns between the father, mother and children are replicas of the past generations and will be repeated in the generations to follow. Emotional distance is the most universal mechanism employed. In addition, marital conflict, sickness or dysfunction in one spouse and projection of the problems to children become symptoms of undifferentiation in a marriage.

Each of Pierre's children (Henri, Anne, Nancy) experienced marital conflict. Dysfunction was also present: alcohol abuse by Henri's wife, Paul and Sam, and Anne's somatic complaints. Several of the children were emotionally impaired. In this multi-generational family study, the family projection process was relatively easy to identify as there were several triangled children in two generations.

Family Projection Process

The family projection process deals with the mechanism by which the nuclear family emotional system potentially creates impairment in one child, identified as the "triangled child." The primary contributing factor to the family projection process is the undifferentiation of the

parents. This process is so universal it seems to be present to some degree in most families. There were several "triangled children" in the Malet family. To some extent Nancy was a "triangled child" due to the relationship she had with her sister Anne, who served as her surrogate mother. Nancy's son, Peter, could be described as a "triangled child" when we first saw him in our therapy system. Anne's daughter, Marie, definitely was the main focus of her family projection process. Later, when Marie left home, the focus turned to her younger sister, Suzanne. The issue of undifferentiation of the various parents, was worked through somewhat successfully over a long period of time, or so it would seem at the present moment.

Emotional Cut-off

Emotional cut-off deals with the relationship between the individuals in a marriage and their families of origin and the extent to which the marital dyad is differentiated from the preceding generation. Unresolved emotional attachment to the parents is the issue here, leading to undifferentiation that must somehow be handled in a person's own life and in future generations.

Denial and isolation were the intra-psychic processes that were used to handle unresolved attachment. Sam's parents lived close by as did the father of Nancy and Anne. However, considerable denial was used to bring about emotional isolation with them.

Emotional cut-off created many problems for Anne and her husband, Paul. To a lesser degree it was a problem for Nancy and her husband, Sam. All needed emotional closeness with their families but were allergic to it. Much therapy time went into this issue of differentiating self in

his/her parental family. Anne, Nancy and Sam seemed to have achieved enough differentiation to move forward with their lives in a more helpful manner.

Multi-generational Transmission Process and Sibling Position

Bowen developed these two variables but we shall merely mention them in this paper. It became quite clear to us in working with the Malet family that the family projection process continues through multiple generations. As the family described its life through three generations there was a remarkable consistency of family functioning through the generations.

Regarding sibling family position, the use of Toman's profiles were somewhat helpful in working with the individual family members, especially when used together with differentiation and projection. However, this variable was used in a minor way in working with the family and really serves no useful purpose in this study.

Summary

This section of the paper has described the Malet family through a structure developed by Bowen using the variables which are components of the Bowen Theory. The use of these concepts provides a context in which the family has been viewed. Several means were used by the various family members to attain freedom within the family system. Denial, isolation, emotional cut-off, the abuse of alcohol, delusion and projection constituted the major means to attain the delusion of freedom. This deluded freedom, in reality, caused additional pain, anxiety and separation. Toward the end of the therapy process, however, forgiveness and

acceptance proved to be the key to individual and family freedom. As family members were able to break through the walls of delusion, recognize feelings, gradually see each other and themselves as whole persons and to accept and forgive, the family system was well on its way to rebuilding.

The next chapter of this project will be a theological reflection on the data presented in chapters II and III.

Chapter IV

FREEDOM AND ALCOHOLISM: SOME EXISTENTIAL ISSUES

This chapter, which will attempt a descriptive theological reflection on the empirical data generated by the case study, will begin with a discussion of an analysis, diagnosis and treatment of the family. The purpose of this chapter is to address the deeper existential issues present in the case study. The approach will move from a social science description to a theological and philosophical description of the emerging existential issues, showing a correlation and interdependence between these descriptions.

Therapy Program

The Malet family therapy goals were the differentiation of family members as individuals with their own identities and the development of a family operational system that was relatively free of the psychopathology of structural and functional imbalance. Emotional triangle configurations had to be resolved, including emotional distancing. Unresolved emotional attachment to parents, resulting in denial and isolation, were therapy targets. Various therapy modalities were employed. Family therapy sessions dealt with many of the symptoms of the dysfunctional system, and root causes were explored in marital therapy. Group therapy was used by several of the family members over a period of a year or so. Individual therapy sessions were scheduled as required. Alcoholics Anonymous and AlAnon were adjunct support services.

Meaninglessness

The family as a whole, as well as the individual family members, had lost its "center." A kind of nonbeing threatened the entire family. Self-affirmation had been replaced, gradually over a period of time, by alcoholic affirmation; the sense of nonbeing threatened the spiritual realities of family members. Meaning was clouded by confusion, pain, emptiness and despair. Emptiness and meaninglessness had become hallmarks of the Malet family. Spiritual self-affirmation was under attack.

Tillich used "the term meaninglessness for the absolute threat of nonbeing to spiritual self-affirmation, and the term emptiness for the relative threat to it."¹ The loss of an ultimate concern caused anxiety for the family. Existence had one meaning, survival. The family had become isolated and cut off from social contacts. The efforts to produce a spiritual center created deeper anxiety. The anxiety of emptiness drove the family to the pit of meaninglessness.

At one point, doubt described much of the family's life. Members were so fused, so undifferentiated, that they could not separate themselves, remove themselves from the family ego mass (to use Bowen's terms) in order to ask what was going on within the system. A kind of despair prevailed. Deluded thinking, unreasonable as it may be, made it possible for family members to cling to faulty beliefs and family traditions, even though such beliefs were part of the family's problem. It seemed imperative for the family to maintain its faulty thinking. When every effort to remove the doubt failed, it was gradually accepted as part of the family

¹Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 47.

system. Doubt co-existed with "insane" thinking and destructive dynamics. From a therapy view the family was nearing its psychopathological depths. From a theological viewpoint the family members were separating themselves from the whole of their reality and each individual self was experiencing isolation. The family members were beginning to experience "total doubt" and their spiritual life was threatened.²

Anxiety

Anxiety permeated the entire family system. Repeatedly, over a period of time, members of the family attempted to break out of their existential situation and the anxiety it produced. But this could not happen successfully. Bowen would describe the efforts as attempts at emotional cut-off. Tillich would describe it as an effort to identify with something "trans-individual." Unresolved emotional attachment, especially to parents, was the therapy issue here. Denial and isolation were the intra-psychic processes that were used to handle unresolved attachments. Theologically some family members attempted to surrender their separation and self-relatedness. To use Tillich's terms, they fled "from . . . their . . . freedom of asking and answering . . . for themselves . . . to a situation in which no further questions can be asked and the answers to previous questions are imposed on . . . them authoritatively."³ It was easier for family members not to ask and doubt so they surrendered the right to do so.

Members of the Malet family increasingly were separated from the wholeness of the reality in which they lived. Rather than dealing with

²Ibid., p. 49.

³Ibid.

them, family members focused on particulars. For instance, emotional distance was employed to avoid facing interpersonal problems. A third person would be added to the two person emotional system. These three person emotional configurations were found throughout the family system. Over a period of time the emotional interactions between family members moved from one dynamic triangle to another. By so doing, life had some meaning, although very limited, and the anxiety of meaninglessness was avoided temporarily. The family members were able to maintain some meaning in their lives but in so doing sacrificed their personal identities. They gave up their freedom in order to maintain some family balance and to escape the anxiety that comes with meaninglessness. In giving up their freedom they experienced increasing loneliness. As Tillich wrote, "Destruction of others and self-destruction are interdependent in the dialectics of loneliness."⁴ Such destruction was part of the family dynamics, increasing in power daily.

Doubt

Doubt, as Tillich has pointed out, is based upon the reality of the separation of persons from the whole of their reality.⁵ The individual person or self is isolated from other realities. In the Malet family personal doubt began to undermine the system's values, standards and beliefs. However, the family symbols that expressed the values, standards and beliefs gradually lost their power. Symbols that had spoken previously to family members became empty forms. Beliefs that had cemented family unity were mocked. Standards for family behavior

⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 72.

⁵Ibid.

gradually eroded producing near chaos. With this process came a weakening of spiritual life and values. With this threat to their spiritual well being came a threat to the whole being of personhood and family membership. Tillich uses the term "ontic" to describe the basic self-affirmation of a being in its simple existence.⁶ This term needs to be used here for the response to the threat described in the previous sentence was for family members to throw away their "ontic existence." Rather than face the despair present in their reality, they ceased affirming themselves. This is a spiritual phenomenon. Tillich saw it as an "expression of . . . existential self-estrangement and of the disintegration of . . . (the) . . . spiritual life into meaninglessness."⁷ The family members were being threatened by nonbeing. Self-affirmation and spiritual well being were under attack.

Guilt

Self-rejection and personal condemnation were therapy issues requiring considerable time and attention. Family members ceased making decisions that were truly theirs. Self-determination was threatened. Control over personal destiny was increasingly tentative. Operating from the "not O.K." or "victim" positions, rejection of self became a norm, as did personal condemnation and guilt. These people had become estranged from themselves, each other and their environment. The presence of guilt was experienced throughout the family system. The Malets expressed the feeling of being "condemned." In therapy sessions they talked of having no or little control over their destinies. They were

⁶Tillich, Courage to Be, p. 42.

⁷Ibid., p. 51.

condemned to a state of despair. The more they employed the "self-will," the more powerless they felt and greater became the sense of despair. Tillich wrote, "The pain of despair is the agony of being responsible for the loss of the meaning of one's existence and of being unable to recover it."⁸ The family felt they could not escape from this bind. They could not escape from themselves.

In order to avoid the anxiety of guilt, the Malet family members attempted action in order to overcome their condition. This, of course, is a typical human response. Some family members became defiant and created additional family and personal conflict. The demands made (usually moral in nature) by some family members were defiantly rejected by other family members. Such rebellious behavior usually increased the moralistic vigor of the other family members and increased their legalism in dealing with each other. Defiant rebellion and legalistic conformity became hallmarks of the various family camps, with the drinkers in one camp (the rebellious) and the non-drinkers in the other. Such behavior eased the guilt for a period of time but it was always lurking in the background. From time to time it would break out again and be discussed openly. This could take the form of feeling guilty for being a failure as a wife or mother (non-drinker) or the remorse of the drinker for hurting other people as well as himself. The end result was moral despair.

Despair

Human beings are basically estranged from their true being. The Malet family shared in this existential reality. They were not essentially

⁸Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, 75.

what they could be or ought to be. But the Malet family increasingly lost sight of their true being. Gradually the sense of family oneness turned to estrangement. Within this context family members experienced guilt. As freedom was being lost the sense of guilt was increasing. The distinction between doubt and guilt became blurred. One seemed to feed upon the other. There was a despair about the guilt. The guilt permeated the entire family system. There appeared to be no way to escape it. The futility of life, as experienced by the family members, became very powerful. The sense of being without hope was driving family members further into pits of helplessness. No simple assurance of forgiveness helped for any period of time. Structurally, spiritually and morally the family was nearing bankruptcy.

Tillich stated that despair is more than a psychological problem or a problem of ethics. He wrote, ". . . it (despair) is the final index of man's predicament; it is the boundary line beyond which man cannot go. In despair, not in death, man has come to the end of his possibilities."⁹ There is "no exit," to use Sartre's language. The state of inescapable conflict is the way Tillich described despair. Again according to Tillich, "The pain of despair is the agony of being responsible for the loss of the meaning of one's existence and of being unable to recover it. One is shut up in one's self and in the conflict with one's self."¹⁰ Therapy sessions had brought family members to a point where they could not escape from themselves. The issues, however, became increasingly ethical and theological. Suicide was a way of getting rid of one's self. This option appeared

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

to be very attractive to one or two members of the family. Some time was devoted to dealing with suicide as a possible way of escaping from the despair. Gradually, suicide was dismissed as not being an option for it did not address the question of nonbeing in its ultimate sense. Also, the Roman Catholic background proved to be a powerful force here. Suicide did not deal with the eternal (life after death) dimension. Another solution had to be found. The pain had to be faced and worked through. This is the decision that was made by first one family member and gradually others, until the entire family decided to face its corporate pain as well. New meaning, new life, had to be sought. Only new beings can produce new behavior and a new family structure.

Estrangement

The spiritual life of the Malet family was threatened over a long period of time. Emptiness and loss of meaning were expressions of the threat. Family members felt very finite and helpless. They were estranged. The role played by guilt in the family system has been identified in the project. Guilt was seen everywhere, even where there was no guilt. The most indirect involvement in a stressful situation would produce feelings of guilt. Real guilt, however, was often denied or repressed. Somehow the family members were lacking the courage to face such guilt. The co-alcoholics (non-drinking family members) built, to use Tillich's words, " . . . a narrow castle of certitude," which they defended with a tenacious self-righteousness.¹¹ The alcoholic family members experienced estrangement in a world of unreality. Delusion had placed family members in a

¹¹Tillich, Courage to Be, p. 76.

position of seeing certitude where it did not exist and doubting that which was above doubt. In their estrangement the issue of meaning was not being confronted. The family lacked the courage to do so.

In their estrangement, the family had become "mere objects" of their environment and circumstances. The family as human beings, were experiencing existential estrangement that is common to all persons. However, the alcoholism exacerbated the condition. The family's world was "falling to pieces." Tillich described self-loss as "the loss of one's determining center, the disintegration of the unity of the person."¹² He identified this condition as being manifested in moral conflicts and in psychopathological disruptions. His description of such reality is almost identical to that described in the alcoholism literature.

One's world also falls to pieces. It ceases to be a world; in the sense of meaningful whole things no longer speak to man; they lose their power to enter into a meaningful encounter with man, because man himself has lost this power.¹³

It is as though alcoholism takes the human situation and magnifies it to the nth degree.

Hope comes, for people like the Malets, when the bottom is reached and nothing is left. Tillich described it in these terms. "In extreme cases the complete unreality of one's world is felt; nothing is left except the awareness of one's own empty self."¹⁴ Self-will, the attempt to become the center of his world and to control it, is described in Alcoholics Anonymous circles as "self-will run riot." Tillich used

¹²Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, 61.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

these words. "The attempt of the finite self to be the center of everything gradually has the effect of its ceasing to be the center of anything."¹⁵ The Malets had become limited. Their environment was limited. Their dependence on that environment was inordinate. Their former world was largely lost. Their dependence was increasingly on their limited environment which, until sobriety, was focused on alcohol and the alcoholic drinkers.

From a viewpoint of Christian theology it is Christ who has the power of conquering existential estrangement. Healing is required. Healing, for Tillich, meant "reuniting that which is estranged, giving a center to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself."¹⁶ Faith is required; "the experience of being grasped by the power of the New Being through which the destructive consequences of estrangement are conquered."¹⁷ The old self, the old family needed to be reclaimed and transferred into the "New Being." New personal life and new family life could only be effected when new ways of encounter with other persons took place. Surrender would be required. Atonement needed to become a reality. The members of the Malet family appeared to be reaching a point in their lives when this could happen.

Community

The concept of community is important in this study, although it will not be developed in detail. Human beings, according to Tillich, actualize as persons "in the counter with other persons within a community.

¹⁵Ibid. II, 62.

¹⁶Ibid, II, 166.

¹⁷Ibid, II, 155.

The process of self-integration under the dimensions of the spirit actualizes both the personality and the community."¹⁸ Using Bowen's categories in the case study, "fusion" was identified as a key issue. The need for differentiation was indicated. Tillich wrote in terms of individualization. He wrote, "The more individualized a being is, the more it is able to participate . . ." in community. "If subjectivity separates itself from objectivity, the objects swallow the empty shell of subjectivity."¹⁹ This condition, to a great degree, existed in the Malet family. What was required was a spiritual community of faith and love that allowed for individualization and at the same time permitted participation "in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life."²⁰

Individualization and participation are polarities present within community life. Self-transcendence of life cannot take place "except through the polar interdependence of individualization and participation."²¹ Neither pole is actual without the other. This conflict was present within the Malet family members. Self-integration as persons had to take place within community. "The continuous mutual encounter of centered self with centered self is possible and actual" in community.²² A healthy community, largely free of psychopathology, was required for the spiritual and mental health of the Malet family.

The life processes of the Malet family as community need to be examined in another dimension. Life processes in a community are

¹⁸Ibid., III, 308.

¹⁹Ibid., II, 65.

²⁰Ibid., III, 172.

²¹Ibid., III, 41.

²²Ibid.

determined to a great extent by their historical dimensions. One of the theories of family systems therapy (which was used in the treatment of the Malet family) is that the family needs to be viewed as an operational system and pathology is defined as a structural or functional family in balance. Communication patterns within the family were seen as reflecting the basic structural and interactional patterns that governed the family's behavior. The Malet family had a history of inadequate communication patterns. The family could not act in a centered way. However, the family required a centered power which was ". . . able to keep the individuals who belonged to it united and which was able to preserve its power in the encounter with similar groups."²³ Although there is a difference in structure between the personal self and the community, the family, as community, had to possess such a centered life for its own actualization and the actualization of the individual members.

Before leaving the subject of community it might be helpful to share some of May's thinking as it relates to the existential reality of the Malet family. May wrote that "one of the central requirements for the constructive overcoming of anxiety in our society is the development of adequate forms of community."²⁴ The implications for adequate family are clear. Family cannot be the only community but it does need to be a community. May wrote that "community implies a positive quality of relatedness of the individual to other persons" in the social environment.²⁵ Relating affirmatively and responsibly are implied. Fromm

²³Ibid., III, 308.

²⁴Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), p. 189.

²⁵Ibid.

stated that in a psychological sense a person needed to relate to other persons in love as well as in creative work.²⁶ These elements of love, relatedness, personal affirmation and responsibility were largely lacking in the Malet family and needed to be restored.

The Spiritual and Psychological: A Correlation

The condition of alcoholism appears to be so closely connected to the existential condition of being human, the guilt, anxiety, and estrangement, that it seems impossible to separate the spiritual and psychological/emotional aspects of the disease. When such a differentiation is made it must be for purposes of understanding and treatment, for the spiritual and psychological factors seem to have a cognate relationship. They seem to be related in origin, having the same roots. Their nature appears to be related. These two independent dynamics (the spiritual and the psychological) seem to be interdependent. Their innate correlation displays a unity of their dependence and independence. Variations in one factor (for instance, the spiritual) correspond with variations with the other (the psychological). The greater the degree of alcoholism, the greater the degree of anxiety, alienation, estrangement and guilt. Likewise, the greater the degree of estrangement, etc., the greater the stress level experienced, which contributes to increased alcoholic abuse. The disease of alcoholism is progressive. Therefore, a progression in the experience of estrangement, etc. will be experienced. This was certainly the case with the members of the Malet family. It must be noted that there is not necessarily a cause and effect relationship

²⁶Ibid.

between alcoholism and estrangement, etc. or estrangement and alcoholism. However, as this project is attempting to demonstrate, there does appear to be a correlation between the two factors and they appear to come from the same root. Treatment requires both the priest and the therapist, the spiritual and psychological. For the Malet family such collaboration was essential for healing to take place. As Tillich has stated, "Neither the medical nor priestly function is bound to its vocational representatives: the minister may be a healer and the psychotherapist a priest and each human being . . . (in family and community) . . . may be both" The goal was to help the Malet family to reach full self-affirmation and, to use Tillich's words, "to attain the courage to be."²⁷

Atonement

Theologically it is stated that "man, in relation to God, cannot do anything without Him. He must receive in order to act. New Being precedes new acting."²⁸ Human beings cannot break through their own estrangement. The bondage of the will is a universal fact. The Malet family, as we have described, had lost its determining center. Increasingly they experienced being without hope, being unable to seek help beyond themselves. Loneliness was experienced as self-destruction and destruction of others. Participation had ceased and individualization, when it was experienced, was seen as estrangement. The need to contradict the marks of estrangement and to have it conquered was present. The need for Christ was present. Christ has the power to conquer

²⁷Tillich, Courage to Be, p. 77.

²⁸Tillich, Systematic Theology, II, 70.

existential estrangement.²⁹ Christ died under the conditions of estrangement. Faith, for the members of the Malet family, would be "based on the experience of being grasped by the power of the New Being through which the destructive consequences of estrangement are conquered."³⁰ In time this happened to some of the individual family members and, to some extent, to the family as a whole. A form of salvation took place by having some of the old person and life reclaimed and transferred into the being of the new person and new family community.³¹

The process of family transformation was related to the action of the atonement. Tillich wrote that "in all human relations he who forgives is himself guilty, not only generally, but in the concrete situation in which he forgives. Human forgiveness should always be mutual."³²

In practical terms this truth was difficult for family members to accept. Some did, in time, and change began to take place in the family system. The context of the healing took place within the atoning processes created by God. Justice has to be done. The self-destructive consequences of the family and personal estrangement were realities and could not be undone. As Tillich has written, "The divine removal of guilt and punishment is not an act of overlooking the reality and depth of existential estrangement."³³

With the Malet family the estrangement was multiplied many times by the abuses of alcohol and the disease of alcoholism. God's atoning

²⁹Ibid., II, 146.

³⁰Ibid., II, 155.

³¹Ibid., II, 166.

³²Ibid., II, 174.

³³Ibid.

activity, however, must be understood "as His participation in existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequence. He cannot remove these consequences; they are implied by His justice. But He can take them upon Himself by participating in them and transforming them for those who participate in His participation."³⁴ Christians believe that the divine participation of God is manifested in the Cross of Christ. Jesus, the New Being, has provided the opportunity to participate in Him and thereby "participate in the manifestation of the atoning act of God."³⁵ God was at work in the life and dynamics of the Malet family and in each person within that community.

Forgiveness

Hope for the Malet family came when individual members became aware they were powerless over alcohol or over the person drinking alcohol and that their lives had become unmanageable. Admission of powerlessness was the first step in liberation. Step two of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, "Come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity," became a rallying point to sanity and prepared the way for a right relation to God." The third step, making a "decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him" opened a locked door for the Malets. Turning of the will over to a higher power and the willingness to let God into their lives did open the possibility for healing to take place. Still required was the need for forgiveness.

³⁴Ibid., II, 174.

³⁵Ibid., II, 176.

Tillich has written that "man can believe in forgiveness only if justice is maintained and guilt is confirmed."³⁶ Theologically and psychologically the symbols of God as "Lord" and as "Father" compete with each other. Just as God must remain both Lord and Judge as his love reunited, so must humans have justice maintained and guilt confirmed. This was true in the Malet family. Persons had to be held responsible for their behavior, guilt had to be confirmed and justice maintained before the power of love could reunite.

Tillich asked, "How can man accept that he is accepted; how can he reconcile his feelings of guilt and his desire for punishment in the prayer of forgiveness; and what gives him the certainty that he is forgiven?"³⁷ The issues raised by this question became the issues to be faced by family members. Laying claim for personal behaviors and accepting responsibility for them proved to be a very difficult hurdle to overcome. "Every human forgiveness . . . requires . . . that he who forgives shall himself be forgiven."³⁸ Until forgiveness was requested and given, freedom and a new life were to evade the family.

Part of the human situation in which family members found themselves was the demand for justice and the fearful desire for punishment. Within the New Being, however, the justice experienced is one which makes the unjust person just, by acceptance. This new justice, transcendent in nature, fulfills human justice but in no sense negates it. Aimed always at reuniting through the power of love, such justice destroys that which needs to be destroyed. With the Malets mental obsession, closed

³⁶Ibid., I, 288.

³⁷Ibid., III, 266.

³⁸Ibid., III, 255.

minds, indifference, prejudice self-righteousness, defiance, misuse of will power, delusion, denial and all the other self-defeating behaviors present in the family had to be destroyed. For the non-drinking members, shame, inadequacy and guilt had to be replaced by confrontation, support, accountability, love and acceptance. For the non-drinking family members support, expression of feelings, taking risks, encouragement and physical touching had to replace anger, guilt, inadequacy, rage, and loneliness.³⁹ Human forgiveness had to take place before freedom and reuniting love were to become realities. Tillich has written that "the courage to surrender one's own goodness to God is the central element in the courage of faith. In it the paradox of the New Being is experienced, the ambiguity of good and evil is conquered, unambiguous life has taken hold of man through the input of the spiritual present."⁴⁰ In this was contained the possibilities of the family freed.

Summary

This project is concerned with a psychology of freedom. The purpose of the study is to explore how freedom is attained in an alcoholic family system. The next chapter attempts a phenomenology of freedom. The hypothesis of this research is that treatment for the entire alcoholic family together involves acceptance and forgiveness in order to rebuild the family system and experience freedom. This chapter has attempted a descriptive theological reflection and

³⁹Sharon Wegscheider, "From the Family Trap to Family Freedom," Alcoholism, the National Magazine, (January-February, 1981), 37-39.

⁴⁰Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 266.

application of theological principles. Existential issues identified have been anxiety, meaninglessness, doubt, guilt, despair, estrangement, community and forgiveness. The struggle of the Malets to have the courage to be truly human in community has been described. The next chapter will deal with the psychology of freedom as experienced by the Malet family. It will focus on a phenomenology of freedom.

Chapter V

FREEDOM AND FORGIVENESS

This section of the paper on freedom and alcoholism will deal with the psychology of freedom as experienced by the Malet family. It will focus on a phenomenology of freedom. Tillich's Systematic Theology will serve as the theological foundation for a critical reflection on empirical data presented earlier in the project. Chapter II described the experiences of the Malet family and the role of alcohol within the family system. Chapter III placed the family experience within Bowen's social science theoretical framework. Some existential issues were identified in Chapter IV. This chapter will deal with freedom, the loss of freedom for the Malet family, recovery of freedom and the meaning of freedom.

Three dimensions of freedom will be explored. What does the loss of freedom look like for members of the Malet family and what is the theology of it? What does the recovery of freedom look like in their lives, especially the elements of acceptance and forgiveness? Finally, what does freedom look like for the alcoholic and alcoholic family, in particular the Malet family? What is the theology of such freedom. These questions will be explored as the means for the description of a phenomenology of freedom and of its psychology, nature and functions.

Loss of Freedom

Members of the Malet family over the years, gradually lost their freedom. Family life was characterized by separation, loneliness, guilt,

anger and loss of destiny. Despair, the state of inescapable conflict¹ (to use Tillich's phrase) permeated the family system. Lack of relationships to other persons was experienced in alienation. Confusion over self-identity often resulted from the state of alienation. Family members appeared to be in an emotional state of feeling alone, solitary and without perceived concern of others. Family members seemed unable to understand the frame of reference of other family members. Freedom, personal and corporate, was limited or lacking. The family had lost its ability to determine its destiny.

For the Malet family loss of freedom looked very much like tragedy without responsibility. The possibility of total and centered acts of the personality were lacking. Instead, the family experienced disintegration, of self and system. Disruptive dynamics, over which the family appeared to have little control, seemed to drive the system into suicidal and insane behavior. Under the control of alcoholism, the family and its members approached a state of fragmentation. The family was "falling to pieces."

The loss of ability to determine one's center is self-loss. The Malet family experienced such a condition. Family and personal unity disintegrated. As "falling to pieces" increased in family life so did the family's world. No meaningful family whole made sense. Things that had prior meaning for the family ceased to do so. The power to enter into meaningful encounters with other family members and the world had gone. In fact, any power possessed by the family had weakened. The unreality of their world was felt with increasing anxiety and pain.

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 75.

Little was left in the family except an awareness of emptiness and dependency upon alcohol.

Tillich wrote that "the attempt of the finite self to be the center of everything gradually has the effect of its ceasing to be the center of anything."² This describes the Malet family. As the family members felt increasingly helpless and finite they increased their attempt to control and become the center of everything. Gradually they ceased to be the center of anything. As this dynamic gained increasing force members of the family and their world were threatened. The family became more limited, increasingly more dependent in a limited environment. Gradually the world of the Malet family was being lost. Only their alcoholic environment was left.

"Man, insofar as he sets and pursues purposes, is free." So wrote Tillich.³ This first and basic quality of freedom is precisely what the Malet family could not do. Survival became the only family purpose. However, destiny without freedom is mere necessity.⁴ Gradually the family members came to realize they did not have the undetermined freedom to decide in whatever way they chose. There was present the universal fact of estrangement. Individual feelings of alienation, separation and sin actualized this universal reality.⁵

For Tillich, "sin is a universal fact before it becomes an individual act."⁶ Sin is a matter of freedom, responsibility and personal

²Ibid., II, 62.

³Ibid., III, 303.

⁴Ibid., II, 130.

⁵Ibid., II, 156.

⁶Ibid., II, 56.

guilt when seen as an individual act. Tillich saw "this freedom imbedded in the universal destiny of estrangement in such a way that in every free act the destiny of estrangement is involved and, vice versa, that the destiny of estrangement is actualized by all free acts."⁷ To separate "sin as fact from sin as act" would be impossible for they are interwoven and "their unity is an immediate experience for everyone who feels himself to be guilty." For the members of the Malet family each member shared in the fact of sin. Gradually, however, family members experienced finite freedom and with it felt the responsibility for every act in which estrangement had been actualized. Responsibility was to become a key factor for recovery and health.

Recovery of Freedom

Destiny is the basis of freedom. Freedom participates in the shaping of destiny. Destiny points to something that is going to happen to someone; it has an eschatological connotation. In Tillich's words, "This makes destiny qualified to stand in polarity with freedom. It points not to the opposite of freedom but rather to freedom's conditions and limits."⁸ In order for the Malet family to experience freedom it was necessary for them first to experience acceptance and forgiveness. What did acceptance and forgiveness look like in the lives of these people? The next several paragraphs will explore acceptance, forgiveness and the recovery of freedom.

⁷Ibid., II, 56.

⁸Ibid., I, 185.

Tillich stressed repeatedly that "destiny is inseparably united with freedom."⁹ The Malet family, over a period of time, engaged in wilful acts that moved toward the separation of freedom from destiny. Freedom was gradually recovered in the Malet family network when this process was reversed and, using Tillich's words, acts "of existential self-realization" united freedom and destiny.¹⁰ Existence in the family life increasingly became both "fact and act." With this reality a process of freedom restoration gained strength and family involvement with their destiny became a reality.

The family members had tried to conquer the evil they experienced through their own good will. Such "hubris," however, avoided the pain of surrender in their efforts for reunion.¹¹ Surrender was crucial for forgiveness to take place. "Forgiveness of sins is a presupposition of the infusion of love."¹² The family members experienced a demand for justice and a fearful desire for punishment. An increasing consciousness of guilt could not be overcome by a simple assurance of forgiveness. Forgiveness could only become a reality when justice was maintained and guilt confirmed. With these realities experienced, freedom became an increasing possibility.

Hope for freedom was present in the family system because "God drives toward the actualization and essentialization of everything that has being."¹³ Herein rested the possibility for freedom to become an

⁹Ibid., II, 59.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 78.

¹¹Ibid., III, 226.

¹²Ibid., III, 227.

¹³Ibid., III, 422.

existential reality. The manifestation of sin and separation within the network showed the power of estrangement from the true being of the family members. This true being became increasingly evident as members began to forgive each other. "He who forgives shall himself be forgiven."¹⁴

Hindering the process of forgiveness was the need to reconcile feelings of guilt and desires for punishment with the wish for forgiveness. The need for acceptance was strong within the family. Each member needed to know he or she was accepted and that there was a place in the family for everyone. Accepting that each person was accepted posed a major problem hindering the experience of freedom. Justice had to be maintained, guilt confirmed, and forgiveness sought, given and accepted. Then, and only then, was freedom restored to the Malet family. Only then were destiny and freedom united. Only then were the conditions for freedom met.

Meaning of Freedom

What does freedom look like for the alcoholic person and alcoholic family? What is the theology of such freedom? For the alcoholic person and system freedom can be described as no longer "longing for rest without conflict."¹⁵ With sobriety can come spiritual freedom, which is as Tillich noted, "first of all growth in freedom from the law."¹⁶ The more people are reunited with their true being the more they are free from the commands of the law. Conflict no longer needs to be denied or avoided

¹⁴Ibid., III, 225.

¹⁵Ibid., II, 75.

¹⁶Ibid., III, 232.

through denial and delusion. The burden of the law and all its "shoulds" is lifted. With the release of the burden goes much of the guilt. Life becomes more important than death.

In many ways freedom can be experienced as a process of sanctification. For the alcoholic person self-acceptance begins to create a mature, self-relatedness. Gradually a reunion with one's self is experienced. The recovering alcoholic, through forgiveness and self-acceptance, experiences freedom through conquering both self-elevation and self-contempt. Tillich wrote that such reunion of a person's emotions, feelings, values, physical and spiritual selves is "created by transcending both the self as subject, which tries to impose itself in terms of self-control and self-discipline or the self as object, which resists such imposition in terms of self-pity and flight from one's self."¹⁷ Freedom for the alcoholic is increased "self-relatedness."

Tillich wrote regarding such self-relatedness. He saw a mature self-relatedness as subject and the self as object and the spontaneous affirmation of one's essential being beyond subject and object."¹⁸ This concept is critical in understanding what freedom is for the alcoholic person. As the process of recovery approaches a mature self-relatedness, the recovering alcoholic becomes more aware, more alive, more spontaneous, more self-affirming, more free. Grandiosity (self-elevation) and self-effacement (self-humiliation) are replaced by self-relatedness and a realistic identity. Awareness, freedom and relatedness are interdependent. All depend on an act of self-transcendence.

¹⁷ Ibid., III, 235.

¹⁸ Ibid.

How does such transcendence take place? Tillich wrote that "Man, insofar as he sets and pursues purposes, is free. He transcends the given situation, leaving the real for the sake of the possible."¹⁹ People are not bound to the situation in which they find themselves. This "self-transcendence" is the first and basic quality of freedom. For recovering alcoholics "self-transcendence" is experienced through the acceptance of being powerless over alcohol and making a decision to turn their wills and lives over to a "higher power." With such acts of existential self-realization, freedom and destiny are united.²⁰

Tillich's theme that "man is man because he has freedom, but he has freedom only in polar interdependence with destiny,"²¹ applied accurately to the recovering alcoholic system, be it an individual person or family. Destiny is not a strange power which determines what shall happen to the alcoholic. It is the alcoholic himself "as given, formed by nature, history, and self." The alcoholic's destiny is the basis of his freedom. His freedom "participates in shaping his destiny." Only the alcoholic who has freedom has a destiny. Tillich wrote that the word "destiny" points to something that is going to happen . . . it has an eschatological connotation."²² Recovering alcoholics are able to experience hope regarding destiny and this is part of their freedom.

Learning that freedom is not the freedom of the function of the will but rather of the total person, a complete self and a rational being

¹⁹Ibid., III, 303.

²⁰Ibid., II, 20.

²¹Ibid., I, 182.

²²Ibid., I, 185.

is perhaps one of the greatest experiences for the recovering alcoholic. Using Tillich's description, freedom "is experienced as deliberation, decision and responsibility."²³ Recovering alcoholics are able to replace compulsiveness with deliberation, not being able to "let go" with decisions of cutting off possibilities, and irresponsibility with responsibility, taking credit for his decisions and behaviors. This is part of freedom for "each of us is responsible for what has happened through the center of his self, the seat and organ of his freedom."²⁴

The destiny of the alcoholic, the destiny of the Malet family, is that out of which their decisions arise. Destiny is the "broad base of self-hood." The recovering alcoholic experiences destiny as the concreteness of his being which (to paraphrase Tillich) makes all his decisions his decisions. The recovering alcoholic knows that destiny is the basis of his freedom and his freedom participates in shaping his destiny. The alcoholic, with his new found freedom, is aware that without freedom he has no destiny. The recovering alcoholic also knows, however, that he has no freedom unless he is apart from alcohol and the tragedy it brings into his life. With freedom the alcoholic can experience the possibility of a "total and centered act of the personality, an act in which all the drives and influences which constitute the destiny of man are brought into the centered unity of a decision."²⁵ Freedom for the recovering alcoholic is life itself. Without it there is

²³Ibid., I, 184.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., I, 40-41.

only death. This is the alcoholic's saga, a saga "rooted in the creative ground of the divine life and to actualize one's self through freedom."²⁶

Summary

Loss of freedom, recovery of freedom and the meaning of freedom have been described in this section of the paper. It has attempted to be a critical theological reflection coming "after the fact." More could be written, more needs to be written, especially around justification, grace and community. However, the focus of this paper was to be on freedom and alcoholism, with a theological reflection based upon the works of Tillich. How is freedom attained in an alcoholic system? This was the basic theological question addressed in this study. The section on freedom described a phenomenology of freedom and its psychology, nature and functions. The delusion of freedom through denial, isolation, emotional cut-off, the abuse of alcohol and projection described in the first section stand in marked and stark contrast to freedom and destiny.

The study shows the integration of a behavioral science approach to the family therapy treatment of an alcoholic family with a theological frame of reference, showing the relationship existing between the two. Not everything described in the theological reflection happened to the Malet family but the possibilities were present. Tillich's theological principles related to the existential realities experienced by the Malet family, especially around the attainment of freedom in an alcoholic system.

²⁶Ibid., I, 256.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to explore the theological questions of how freedom is attained in an alcoholic family system. It is basically a study in the psychology of freedom. The phenomenology of freedom has been explored through a case study and a critical theological reflection on the social science data. Bowen's Social Science Categories have been applied to the clinical case study. Appropriate freedom and forgiveness have been drawn from the works of Tillich. An effort has been made to show the correlation that exists between the spiritual and psychological factors present in alcoholism.

Recent literature defines the disease of alcoholism as a family lifestyle and the primary disease within each family member. This paper is a theological reflection on a family therapy treatment of an alcoholic family. The theological issue involved in the treatment centers around how freedom was attained in such a system, freedom to break out of the obsessive/compulsive roles and to become free, self-determining persons within a healthy family network.

The problem has been addressed through a case study of one family with whom the author and his professional associates had worked over the last several years. Three generations were represented in this study. The study went beyond the scientific literature of marriage and family therapy and explored the role of forgiveness in attaining freedom within an alcoholic family system. The research hypothesis was that

treatment for the entire alcoholic family together involves acceptance and forgiveness in order to rebuild the family system. Social science analytic tools were employed, especially the categories developed by Bowen.

Several means were used by the various family members to attain freedom within the family system. Denial, isolation, emotional cut-off, the abuse of alcohol, delusion and projection constituted the major means to attain the delusion of freedom. This deluded freedom, in reality, caused additional pain, anxiety and separation. Toward the end of the therapy process forgiveness and acceptance proved to be the key to individual and family freedom. As family members were able to break through the walls of delusion, recognize feelings, gradually see each other and themselves as whole persons and accept and forgive, the family system was well on its way to rebuilding.

The study shows the integration of a behavioral science approach to the family therapy treatment of an alcoholic family in a theological frame of reference, showing the relationship existing between the two. Theological identification of existential issues included meaninglessness, anxiety, doubt, guilt, despair, estrangement, community, the spiritual and the psychological, atonement and forgiveness. Freedom seemed to be made possible through a process of forgiveness.

The persons described in the case study required a creative transformation to bring about a life of meaning and purpose, where love was shared and justice prevailed. That there was order to the experiences of life and a certain moral direction helped free the Malets from the prison of their alienation and oppression. To a certain extent the family seemed to have a fear of freedom because of the responsibility that freedom would place upon them.

The family had to learn to "risk the uncertain future." In many ways family members saw freedom as freedom from responsibility. They were free from others and they attempted to be free from their past. As a result they were incapable of answers to their most fundamental questions about their human existence. True freedom was freedom for them to acknowledge that they were not self-sufficient and that they had the freedom to live for someone and something other than themselves. Holmes and Westerhoff have written, "Freedom is life in the unknown. Freedom can only be pursued if we have an appreciation of mystery. Close out the mystery in life and you destroy freedom."¹ Alcohol beclouded the mystery; forgiveness helped to restore it.

Johnson wrote that "physical complications, mental mismanagement, and emotional disorder are accompanied by a similarly progressive spiritual deterioration . . . a person cannot become an alcoholic unless there is conflict between his/her behavior and his/her values."² He stated that the crux of the problem is characterological conflict which is the basic cause at the root of the symptoms. Final resolution comes through forgiveness. Acceptance and forgiveness by other persons demands self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. Movement from acceptance to surrender is the ultimate resolution of the alcoholic's characterological conflicts. "God help me to be who I am," can come with such surrender.³

Acceptance and forgiveness help make for a spiritual climate, a caring community, in which persons can become increasingly self-aware,

¹Urban T. Holmes and John H. Westerhoff, Christian Believing (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 110.

²Vern E. Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 99.

³Ibid., p. 104.

empathetic and supportive. Self-affirmation in such a community helps individual family members to transcend the self. In such a community encounter with God can come through acceptance, forgiveness and participation with other persons. A new family community, a "new order," is possible. Such community makes possible the continued liberation of family members. This freedom comes as a result of the willingness to accept responsibility for the future, and to accept and forgive others and self.

Forgiveness for the Malet Family

Freedom was attained finally in the Malet family through forgiveness, replacing denial and delusion. The dynamics of forgiveness were present in the family as therapy progressed. Forgiveness was a corporate process, with a goal of restoring broken relationships at a level enhancing to the lives of persons involved. The process involved some form of inward admission of fault, real remorse, outward expression of guilt, and earnest desire for proper restitution which was acceptable to the injured person. Such forgiveness led to a mutual acceptance by each individual of the other as he/she is, that was as the person actually existed, and implied restored trust and goodwill.

The restored relationships were costly to all persons involved. For instance, Nancy, the youngest daughter, had to admit to feeling hurt, afraid, lonely, inadequate and angry. She had to take responsibility for herself and stop blaming other people. For Anne, the eldest daughter, it meant laying personal claim to her fear, pain and guilt. Pierre, the father, had to deal with his own guilt, hurt, shame, fear and pain. Each person had to see the others as they really were. This was difficult.

Each family member had lived behind a personal wall of defenses that compulsively covered up the true feelings of the person and forced the person to live in the trap of self-delusion. Denial and delusion, however, were gradually replaced as the dynamics of forgiveness reached throughout the family system.

The Dynamics of Forgiveness

Members of the Malet family reported that the experience of human forgiveness by both the injurer and the injured had a deeper benefit spiritually. Identifying self with the original destructive situation and paying the price of personal pride led all persons involved to a position of being more forgiving to self and others and more accepting of self and others.

In forgiving others a person had to forgive self as well. The reduction of the guilt and moral anxiety allowed greater freedom to accept the intuitive insight that God's love and mercy are real and available. Such a climate tended to promote "spiritual growth and health." For the Malet family, restored relationships were essential for the securing and maintaining of meaningful and satisfying living for the members involved. Such restored relationships were experienced in terms of positive emotions and attitudes, especially in terms of faith, hope and love.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be listed resulting from this research project. They deal with the commonality alcoholic family systems have with most family systems, the close relationship existing between the spiritual and psychological factors of alcoholism, and the need for

priest and psychotherapist to treat both the spiritual and psychological symptoms manifested in alcoholic family systems.

1. Families suffering from alcoholism have a deep commonality with other families and share, with them, the existential issues common to all people. The result of this research would indicate that all human beings suffer from anxiety, meaninglessness, despair and the other existential issues identified in the project. This commonality has to be stressed because of the tendency for alcoholic families to blame all family problems on alcohol and/or the alcoholic drinker. Alcohol exacerbates the conditions found in many other families that are relatively alcohol free. This does not mean that there are not some characteristics peculiar to alcoholism, for there are. But these are minor compared to the areas of commonality. There does not seem to be any one ultimate cause for alcoholism although there are factors that contribute to alcoholic patterns. These factors are several (physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, chemical, etc.) and must be dealt with at different levels. When this is not understood or neglected, an alcoholic person is usually treated separate from his/her family and the physical is treated by the physician, the spiritual by the priest, the psychological/emotional by the psychotherapist, counselor, etc. The deeper theological issues of freedom, acceptance and forgiveness are often never identified or somehow lost in the process. Yet, because of their commonality with other families, the family with alcoholic problems needs to be seen first as a human family and secondly as a family with a peculiar set of problems. The larger context must be maintained throughout the therapeutic relationship so the human issues can be identified and resolved.

2. The spiritual and psychological/emotional factors in an alcoholic family system are independent realities as identified on the surface. However, probing below the symptom level leads one to think that they are descendants from the same source. If their origin is not identical, at least they appear to have a common nature. The mental and emotional phenomena of the psychological and the moral and religious phenomena composing the spiritual seem to have a correlation. Meaninglessness and emptiness are spiritual manifestations, as mental obsessions, "insane thinking" and anxiety are psychological manifestations. But each has a common source, namely lack of the "courage to be," to use Tillich's phrase. Their interdependency appears to exist.

3. Therapists and counselors, be they clergy or lay, must treat the entire person afflicted with alcoholism. This means that persons involved with alcoholism cannot be dealt with apart from the family unit. Alcoholism must be viewed through systems glasses. The theological and therapeutic implications of this are far reaching. Clergy, perhaps, have a tendency to view the person theologically and apart from his or her family system. Professional counselors and psychotherapists, perhaps, have a tendency to treat only the emotional and psychological symptoms and avoid the spiritual. However, the basic question with alcoholism is theological in nature, namely, how is freedom attained within such a system? If this is to be dealt with, the opportunity for forgiveness must be part of the therapy process. For clergy this means to deal with the alcoholic or co-alcoholic within the family system, where acceptance and forgiveness need to take place. For the professional therapist it will require going to a deeper level to deal with emptiness,

meaninglessness, purpose and forgiveness. The same can be said for the physician treating the physical manifestations of the problem or the psychiatrist.

In conclusion, then, let us express the belief that all freedom rests in Christ. No one is totally free. No one has true freedom apart from Him. The ultimate concerns of life, death, freedom, existential isolation and meaninglessness are manifested in personality and psychopathology, as this research project has demonstrated. In this project the fundamental concerns of therapy and the central issues of human experience are woven together within a theological context. Freedom is of concern to the priest and the clinician. The source of freedom, its nature and how it can be achieved have been the subjects of this research project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allport, G. W. Letters from Jenny. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965.
- Bowen, Muarry. Family Therapy in Clinical Practice. New York: Aronson, 1978.
- Clinebell, Howard J., Jr. Understanding Counseling the Alcoholic Through Religion and Psychology. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.
- Coleman, James C., and Constance L. Hammen, Contemporary Psychology and Effective Behavior. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1974.
- Hammon, Robert L. Almost All You Ever Wanted to Know About Alcoholism. Lansing, MI: AID, 1973.
- Hindman, Margaret. "Family Therapy in Alcoholism." Alcohol, Health and Research World, I, 1 (Fall 1976), 2-9.
- Holmes, Urban T., and John H. Westerhoff. Christian Believing. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
- Johnson, Vernon E. I'll Quit Tomorrow. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- May, Rollo. The Meaning of Anxiety. New York: Ronald Press, 1950.
- Steinglass, Peter. "Family Therapy in Alcoholism." Alcohol, Health and Research World, I, 1 (Fall 1976), 4.
- Stewart, David A. Thirst for Freedom. Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1960.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. 3 Vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963.
- Tillich, Paul. The Courage to Be. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
- Toman, W. Family Constellation. New York: Springer, 1961.
- Wegscheider, Sharon. "From the Family Trap to Family Freedom." Alcoholism, The National Magazine (January-February 1981) 237-39.
- Wegscheider, Sharon. The Family Trap: No One Escapes from a Chemically Dependent Family. Minneapolis: Johnson Institute, 1976.
- White, R. W. Lives in Progress. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1952.